

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2386

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN SF

SUBJECT: PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS MEDICAL TREATMENT

REF: A) STATE 140596 B) GABORONE 1032 C) GABORONE 1668

1. FROM FREQUENT PERSONAL CONTACT WITH CROSS SECTION OF THE NEARLY 400 PCVS IN BLS COUNTRIES, I FEAR THAT SAM BROWN'S REMARKS TO YOU (REF A) REVEAL EXTENT OF HIS UNAWARENESS OF DISSATISFACTION AND RESENTMENT BUILT UP AMONG PCVS IN RECENT MONTHS CULMINATING IN PEACE CORPS MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY. FEELINGS ARE WIDESPREAD CONCERNING SEVERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS AND THE REACTIONS TAKE DIFFERENT FORM AND ARE OF DIFFERENT INTENSITY. THE MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY IS ASSUMING BRUNT OF THE DISSATISFACTION AND CURRENT PUBLICITY TENDS TO FUEL CRITICISMS.

2. PART OF PEACE CORPS/WASHINGTON'S PROBLEM, ALSO EVIDENT IN SAM BROWN'S COMMENTS, IS ITS SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION. THIS IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT PC DIRECTORS IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES FEEL EFFECTIVELY "GAGGED". THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD
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NOT TO QUESTION PC/W DECISIONS, INTER ALIA ON MEDICAL TRAVEL, AND HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT PCV DISSENTING OPINION IS OF NO INTEREST SO IT GOES UNREPORTED. GIVEN THIS CONTEXT, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THAT PCVS WERE LIKELY SOURCE OF AP REPORT OF "GAG ORDER" JUST AS THEY WERE BEHIND ORIGINAL STORIES TO THE PRESS. IN FACT, VOLUNTEERS

DIRECTLY CONCERNED BY MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICY HAVE NOT CONCEALED FROM ANYONE THEIR FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT. WITH PCVS TALKING AND TAKING CALLS FROM THE PRESS, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE MEDIA INTEREST EXPRESSED TO THIS EMBASSY, ALTHOUGH SABC TELEPHONED ON JUNE 1 AND WAS PROMPTLY REFERRED TO WASHINGTON.

3. AS FOR SAM BROWN'S CONCERN ABOUT PCVS FROM SWAZILAND, THE ALLEGED LOLLING ON SOUTH AFRICAN BEACHES LOOMS VERY SMALL WHEN COMPARED WITH PCV TRAVEL TO RHODESIA. WE HAVE REITERATED TO ALL THREE PC DIRECTORS AND TO GROUPS OF PCVS OUR CONCERN ABOUT PHYSICAL DANGER FROM HEIGHTENED GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IN RHODESIA, LACK OF US CONSULAR PROTECTION, ETC. OUR AIM HAS BEEN TO HEIGHTEN CONSCIOUSNESS, KNOWING THAT VOLUNTARY RESTRAINT IS THE ONLY RECOURSE WE HAVE (REF B). I URGED THIS VIEW ON CAROLYN PAYTON AND BILL GAYMON DURING THEIR VISIT LAST FEBRUARY. SO DID PRESIDENT KHAMA WHEN, IN RESPONSE TO THEIR SUGGESTION THAT PCVS SHOULD NOT TRAVEL TO THE RSA, HE REPLIED THAT HE GOES THERE HIMSELF FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND BELIEVED THAT SUCH TRAVEL WAS A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE.

4. I SHOULD ADD THAT PUBLICITY ON PC MEDICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRAVEL POLICY CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF SENATOR HAYAKAWA ON JUNE 1, HE IS, AS YOU KNOW, A VIGOROUS PROPONENT OF NON-RACIALISM. BUT HE CALLED THE PC POLICY "MISPLACED MORALISM" AND DEPLORED THE TACIT COERCION INVOLVED IN PC REFUSAL TO REIMBURSE (OR PAY IN ADVANCE) FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT IN RSA FOR PCVS WHO WANT IT AND WHO, THEREBY, SPARE THEMSELVES SEVERAL DAYS TRAVEL TIME AND OVER \$1000 IN TAXPAYERS' MONEY, IN ORDER TO RECEIVE WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS INFERIOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. THE SENATOR DEVOTED PERHAPS 15 MINUTES DISCUSSING THE MATTER WITH ME. I GOT THE IMPRESSION HE WAS MAKING MENTAL NOTES THAT MAY FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE DAILY JOURNAL HE KEEPS AND THAT MAY SURFACE IN WASHINGTON AT SOME POINT.

NORLAND

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